



THE 1898 CANADIAN MAP STAMP

A study of its printing and varieties.

Robert Lighthouse

What's with the 2¢ 1898 Canadian map stamp– the first Christmas stamp?

The issue date was December 25, 1898, meant to illustrate the British Empire dominions, colonies and protectorates across the globe. Printed by the American Banknote Company (Ottawa), 20 million were ordered, 19,927,500 were delivered, presumably spoilage accounted for the difference.

The goal of this presentation is to detail the purpose of the map stamp, summarize the four issued plates, discuss the issue's unique production process and inherent resulting flaws, and give examples of its use.

Shown will be singles, multiples, imperforate varieties and usages on cover, with emphasis on identifying varieties.

Research has taken me over 35 years examining thousands of these stamps, comparing each to known platings, varieties and re-entries identified by experts in philatelic journals from around the world, and making some of my own along the way. Come see why I enjoy collecting Scott #85 and #86 so much!

Background

At the Imperial Conference on Postal Rates conference on postage matters held in London in July 1898, William Mulock, Postmaster General of Canada, proposed an Imperial penny postage rate for a half-ounce letter to or from any member country as an affordable way of increasing mail volume and uniting the far-flung nations. The plan was adopted by the group (except for Australia and New Zealand) and slated for implementation at the start of the new year.

This was also of interest to the Universal Postal Union, a body of over 100 member countries around the world based in Bern, Switzerland, providing advisory, technical assistance and mediation on all matters dealing with the mail. The British Empire at the time made up a large part of the organization.

Thus was born the need for a 2c (equal to 1d) Canadian Imperial postage stamp.

- December 7, 1898 – Canadian post offices started receiving the new stamp
- December 25, 1898 – First day of issue for the map stamp on Christmas Day
- January 1, 1899 – First day of the new British Empire international surface rate

Design

The design of the stamp was recommended by Mulock himself using a “Mercator Projection,” an image projected into a box-like structure, exaggerating the map features the further north and south one goes.

Die proof of the accepted black engraving

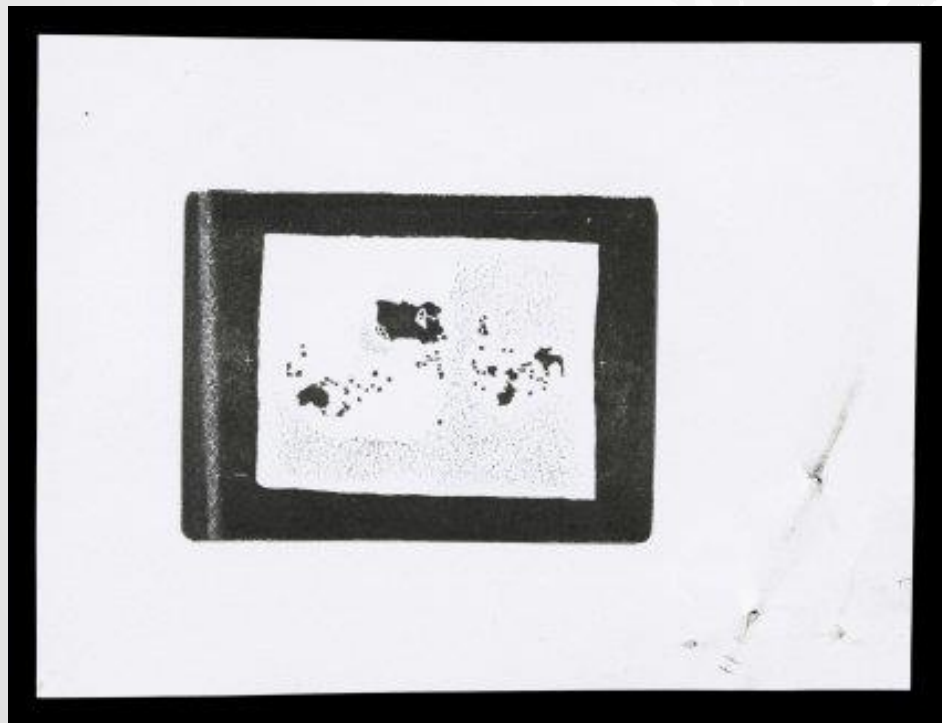
Engraver's Essay



Design

The map stamp was especially impressive as it would be tri-colored. Carmine would be used to color the various British possessions, and lavender then blue in later printings for the seas. Below are the typographed die proofs of each.

British Possessions (98x73 mm)



Oceans (85x73 mm)



ex-American Bank Note Company Archives

Design

The seas were printed in two colors, lavender at first, then blue.

Hybrid large die proof (150 x 106 mm)
lavender, black and carmine



Ex- T. Gillian

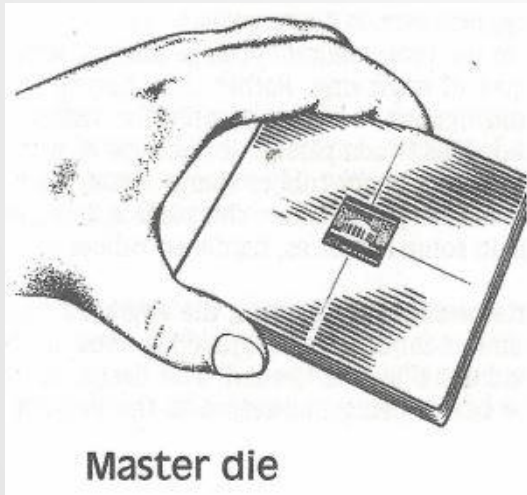
Hybrid large die proof (91 x 83 mm)
blue, black and carmine



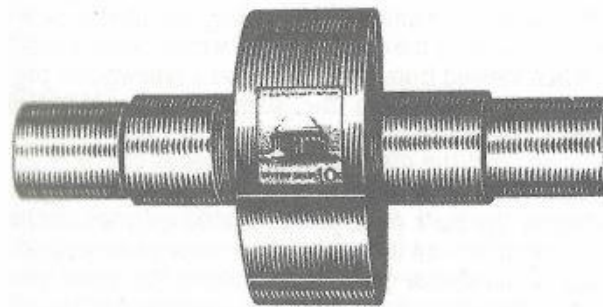
1999 Greene Foundation certificate

Production – Engraved (Intaglio) Map

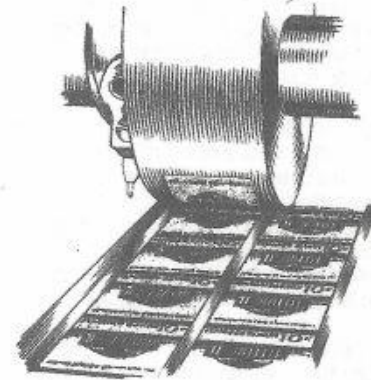
With the design finalized, a hardened master die of the map part was made. That “negative” image was pressed on the transfer roll creating a “positive” and rocked into place one at a time on the plate, creating a 10 stamp by 10 stamp “negative” grid. Five separate plates of 100 were made, numbered 1 to 5.



Master die



Transfer roller

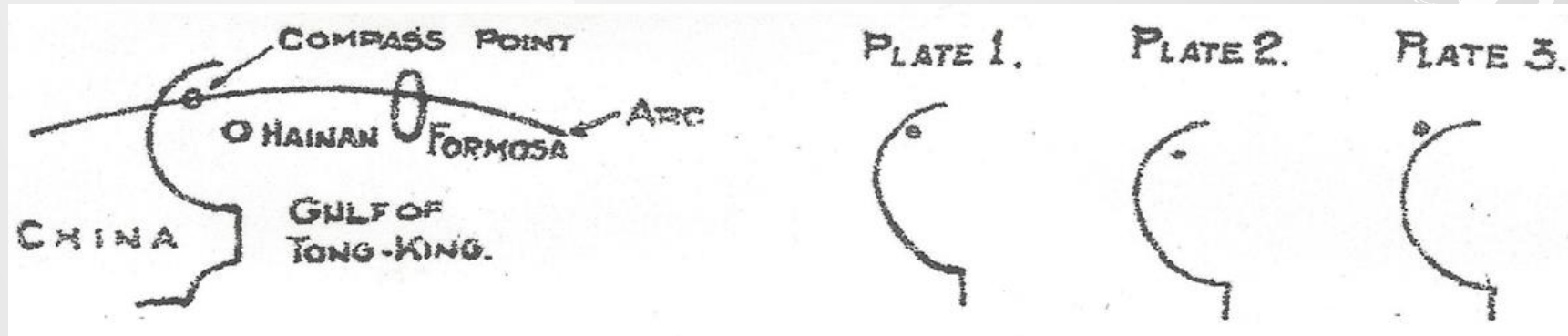


Transferring to plate

When the initial rolling left an imperfect image, a new transfer of that image was impressed over the old. If the match was not exact, part of the old image could be seen along with the new, creating a “transfer error.” Several of these consistent varieties exist “plated” by specialists who proved from which plate number and which position (1 through 100) they were printed.

Production – Engraved (Intaglio) Map

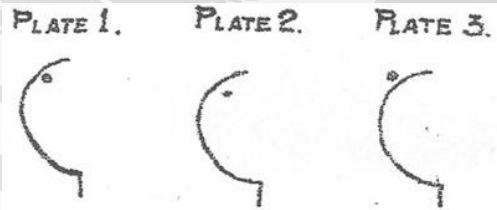
Each stamp's image was positioned manually on the plate using a series of scribed arcs that helped align the transfer roll exactly in place. Doing so left a small dot behind on the plate in addition to the arc itself.



The leg of the scribing tool then moved up to the freshly engraved arc, and the process continued on the plate. Any slight mis-positioning created a variety of where the dot impression appeared and its size. Some of these dots were burnished from the plates before being used, but others remained. Differences in the dots are most noticeable near the island of Hainan. Compare the dot's location and size found on Plates 1, 2 and 3 on the diagram above.

Production – Engraved (Intaglio) Map

Samples of dot placements.



P1-13



P1-79



P2-55

Production – Engraved (Intaglio) Map

Five different production plates of 100 were created, numbered 1 through 5. However Plate 4 was deemed unusable and never put into production. The remaining plates were used simultaneously during printing.

imperforate progressive
plate proof in black,
quarter sheet, unknown
plate number

ex-American Bank Note Company
archives, 1991 Greene Foundation
certificate, largest known multiple



Production – Additional Color Passes

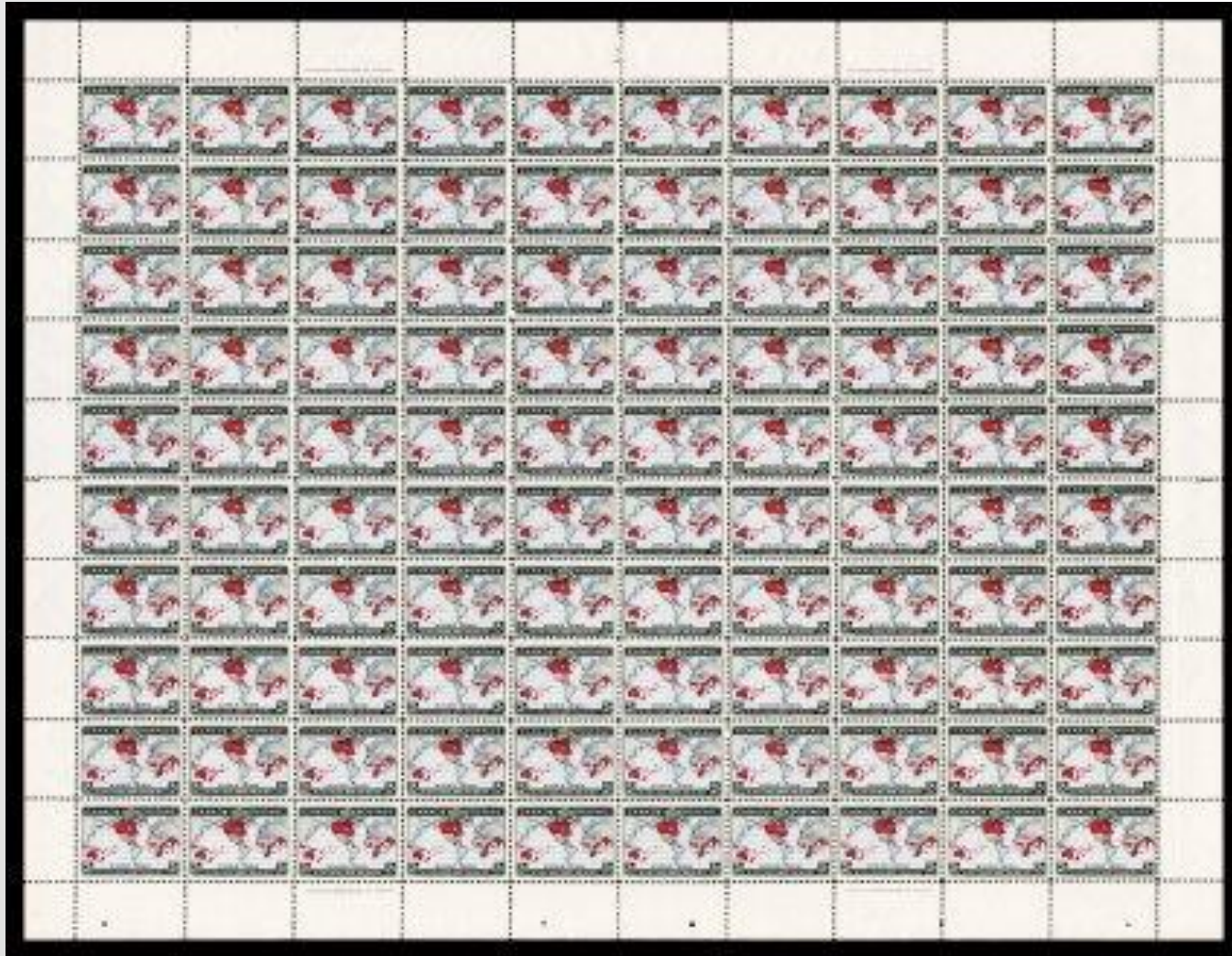
Once the black map sheet was printed, two more passes were needed to apply the additional colors for the seas and Empire territories. Unlike the black map printed by engraving, which left ink raised on the stamp's surface, the colors were printed by typography. Ink was applied to the paper's surface by rollers with the design forced into the paper, leaving the surface flat. Color alignment was tough!



Progressive Plate Proof



Production – Sheet Layout



Complete Sheet, Plate 1



Plate Number Center Top

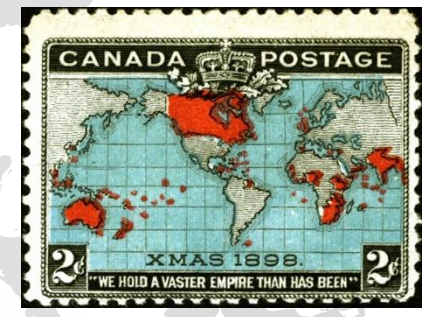
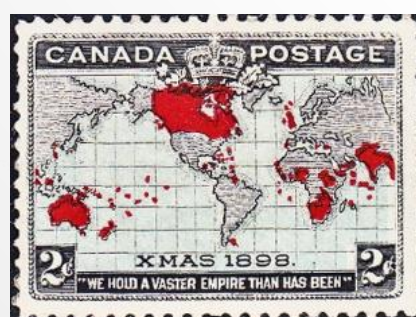
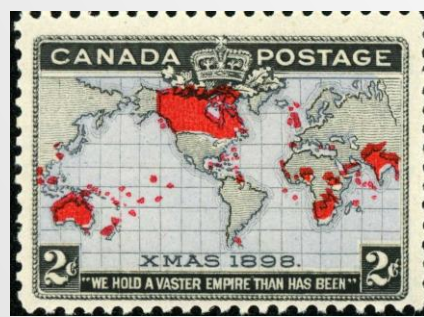
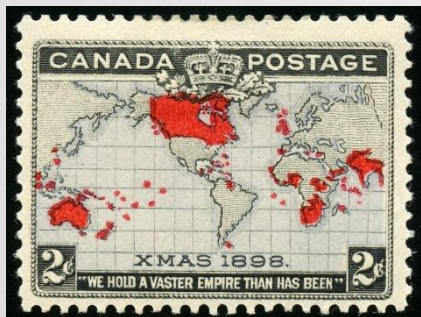


Printer Mark P03, P08, P93, P98

Production – Seas Color Varieties

Controversy remains whether the sea colors were intended to be in two different colors, lavender and blue, or experimented with when printed. Color varieties and shades abound.

Plate	Ocean Color	Earliest Known Date	% Produced
1	Lavender	December 7, 1898	10%
1	Pale Blue Green	December 16, 1898	8%
1	Deep Blue Green	December 23, 1898	8%
2	Very Deep Blue Green	January 1, 1899	21%
2	Lavender	February 11, 1899	10%
3	Lavender	March 7, 1899	24%
5	Lavender	March 27, 1899	6%
5	Bright Blue Green	March 27, 1899	13%

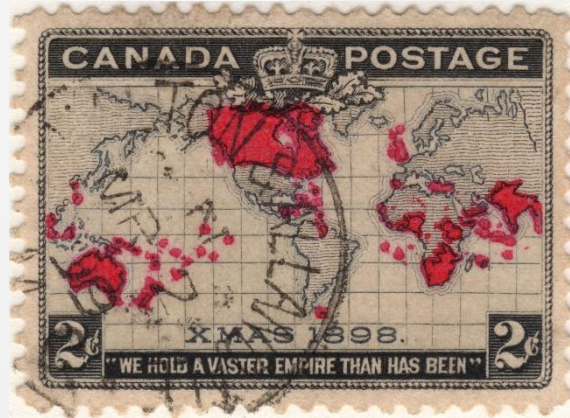


Production – Seas Color Varieties

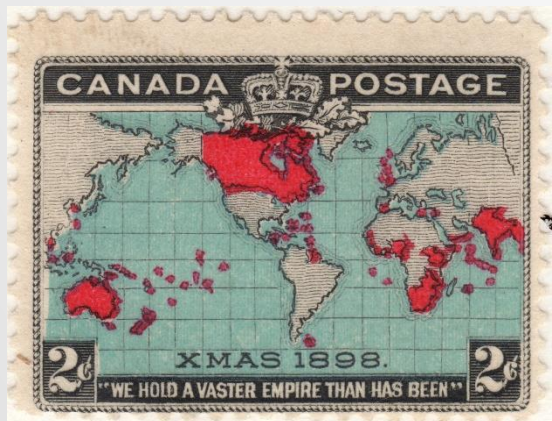
Color varieties from Plate 1.



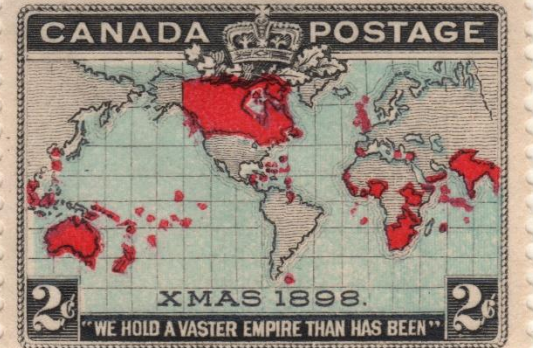
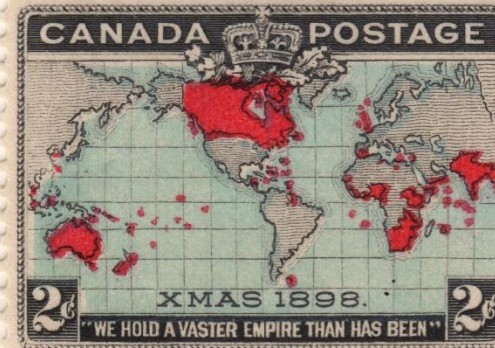
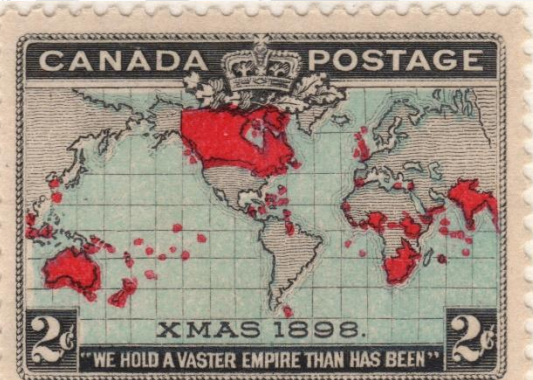
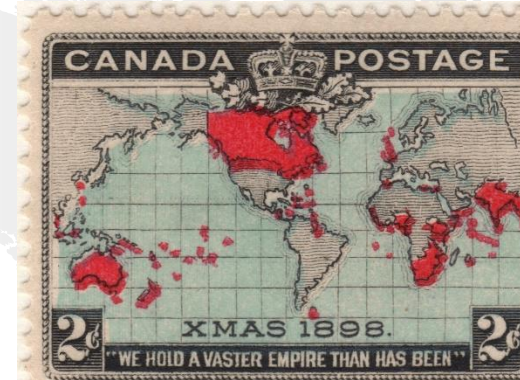
P1-03 Lavender Sea



P1-39 Greyish Sea



P1-41 Deep Blue Green Sea



P1-41,42,51,52
Pale Blue Green Sea

Production – Seas Color Varieties

Color varieties from Plate 2.



P2-71 Lavender Sea



P2-93 Deep Blue Green Sea



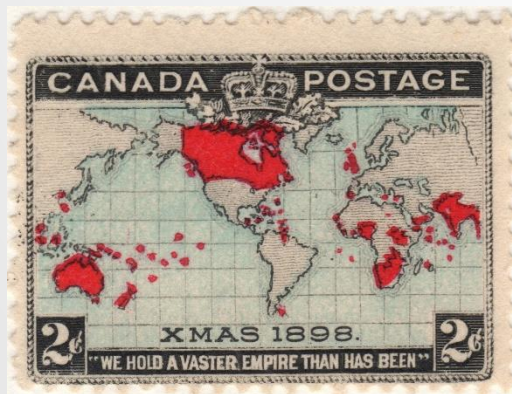
P2-89,90,99,100 Very Deep Blue Green Sea

Production – Seas Color Varieties

Color varieties from Plate 3 and 5.



P3-11 Lavender Sea



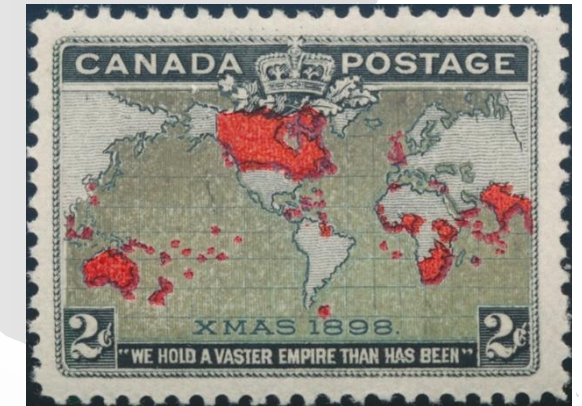
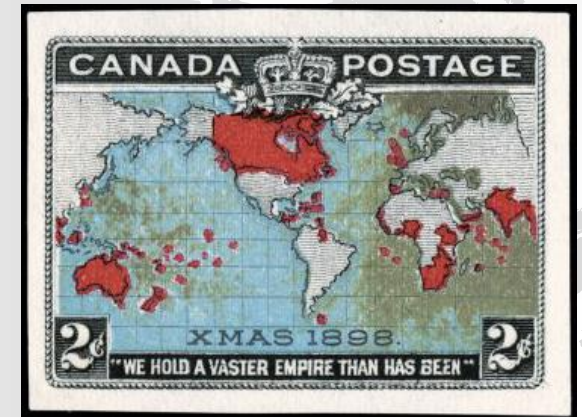
P5-09 Lavender Sea



P5-09 Bright Blue Green Sea

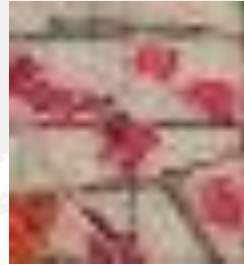
Production – Seas Color Varieties

Known as the “Muddy Waters” variety, this color is due to the oxidation of the sea’s ink. This ink toning can be found on both lavender and blue sea shades in various degrees, but it is uncertain whether they came from certain ink batches.



Production – Red Territories

The typographic printing process used to print the red color was fraught with technical problems with an assortment of results. Two red plates were used.



**P1-10 Pacific Island
Group- Extra Island**



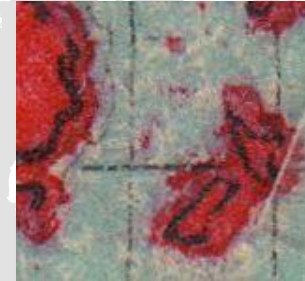
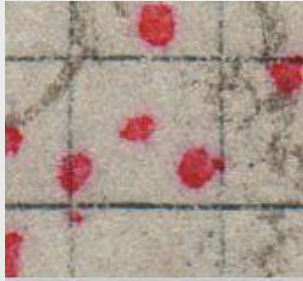
**P1-17 Pacific Island
Group- Odd Shaped Island**



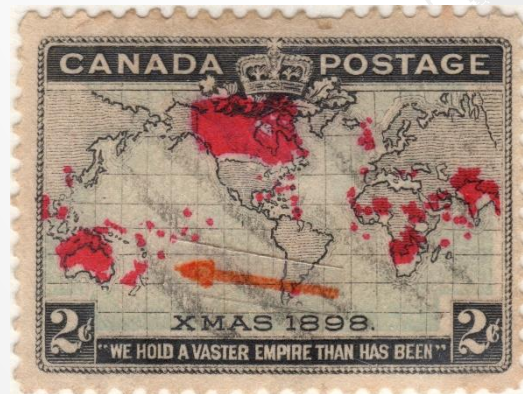
**P1-79 Indian Ocean
Group- Islands Large
and Fused**

Production – Red Territories

A few additional red color anomalies.



P3-43 Under-inked



**P1-26 New Zealand
with Distinct Horns**



**P2-43 Three Dots
Between Australia/NZ**

Production – Plate Re-Entries

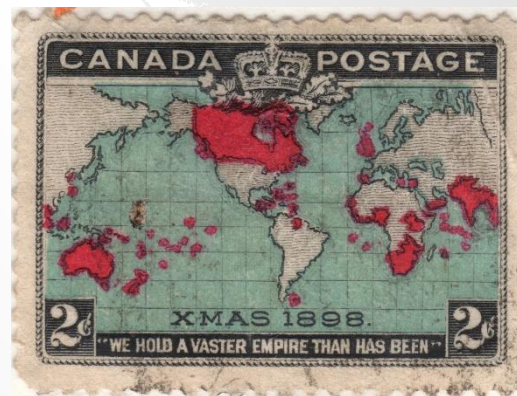
Plates 2 and 3 wore down excessively during production, especially the cable link border around some impressions, which needed re-engraving, sometimes a minor manual re-touch. These created a wealth of varieties.



**P5-73 Top Left Spurs
and Value Tablet
Manually Re-cut**



**P2-78 Lower Left
Cable Links
Manually Re-cut**



**P2-19 Top Left
Cable Manually
Re-cut**



**P3-100 Re-entry of
"PIRE" and also at
Lower Right Side**

Production – Plate Re-Entries

Re-entries required re-engraving of both lateral guidelines and lower part of each worn cable. The worn image was not always fully erased, leaving part of the old engraving behind when a new transfer roller impression was made.



**P2-95 Lower Left
Spurs**



**P2-39 "We Hold"
Re-entry**



**P3-96 Lower Right
Re-entry**

Production – Plate Re-Entries

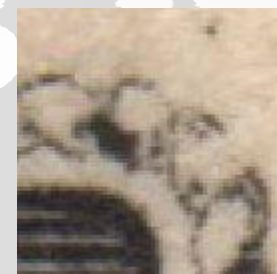
Researchers have proved these by comparing the engraved plate proofs with stamps and finding specific examples of re-touches or re-engravings that happened during the production process. Here's one match up. The top corner is weakly engraved in the proof, but strengthened in the stamp. Note the position of the guide dots in both cases.



Plate Proof Position 21



P5-21



Proof



Stamp

Production – Plate Re-Entries

This is the most famous of all the map stamp re-entries. There is extensive doubling throughout the entire image, particularly in “CANA” of CANADA. The lower cable is retouched with spurs under “Hold.” There is doubling of “XMAS” and the lines of latitude above.



P5-91

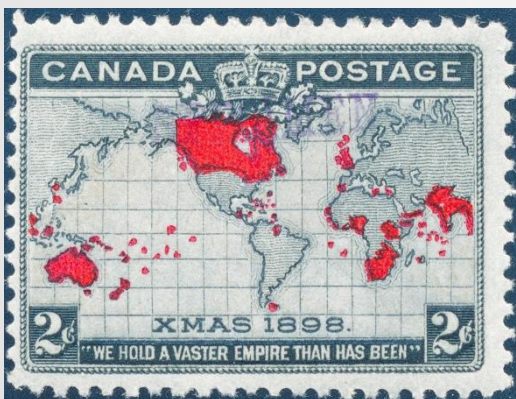
Production – Errors, Freaks and Oddities

Production problems did create an assortment of EFOs. Here are a few examples.



Post-Production

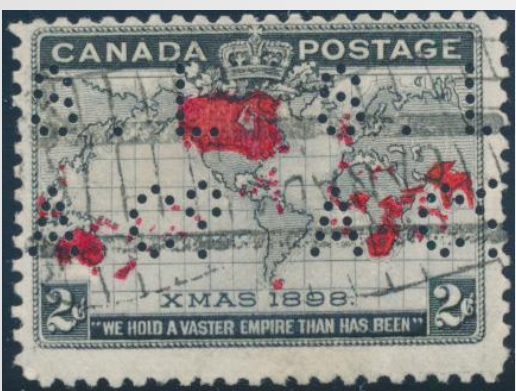
With the stamps printed, several “add-ons” were applied to them...



Specimen (in purple)



Various Toronto Precancels



Perfin- Sun Life Assurance Company, Montreal



Perfin- W.J. Gage & Company, Toronto



Usages – First Day

Special commemorative envelope for Christmas Day, 1898 bearing the new multi-colored map stamp (Plate 1) and a Berlin, Ontario first day favor cancel. The envelope was issued in multiple colors, as can be seen on the next cover, postmarked February 13, 1899 but not with the map stamp.



Usages – Third Day of Use

This cover from Plate 1 has a visually striking franking of a ½ cent Queen Victoria Maple Leaf stamp, a ½ cent Queen Victoria Jubilee stamp and a 2 cent map stamp totaling 3 cents. December 27, 1898 postmark from Campbell, Ontario, sent to Saginaw, Michigan. On January 1, 1899, the letter rate to US addresses was reduced from 3 to 2 cents per 1/2 ounce. The basic half-ounce Canadian domestic letter rate also was reduced that day from 3 to 2 cents.



Usages – Bisect

An unusual bisect usage, cutting the 2¢ stamp value in half to 1¢, paying the local drop rate for printed matter. Postmarked Montreal, February 25, 1899.



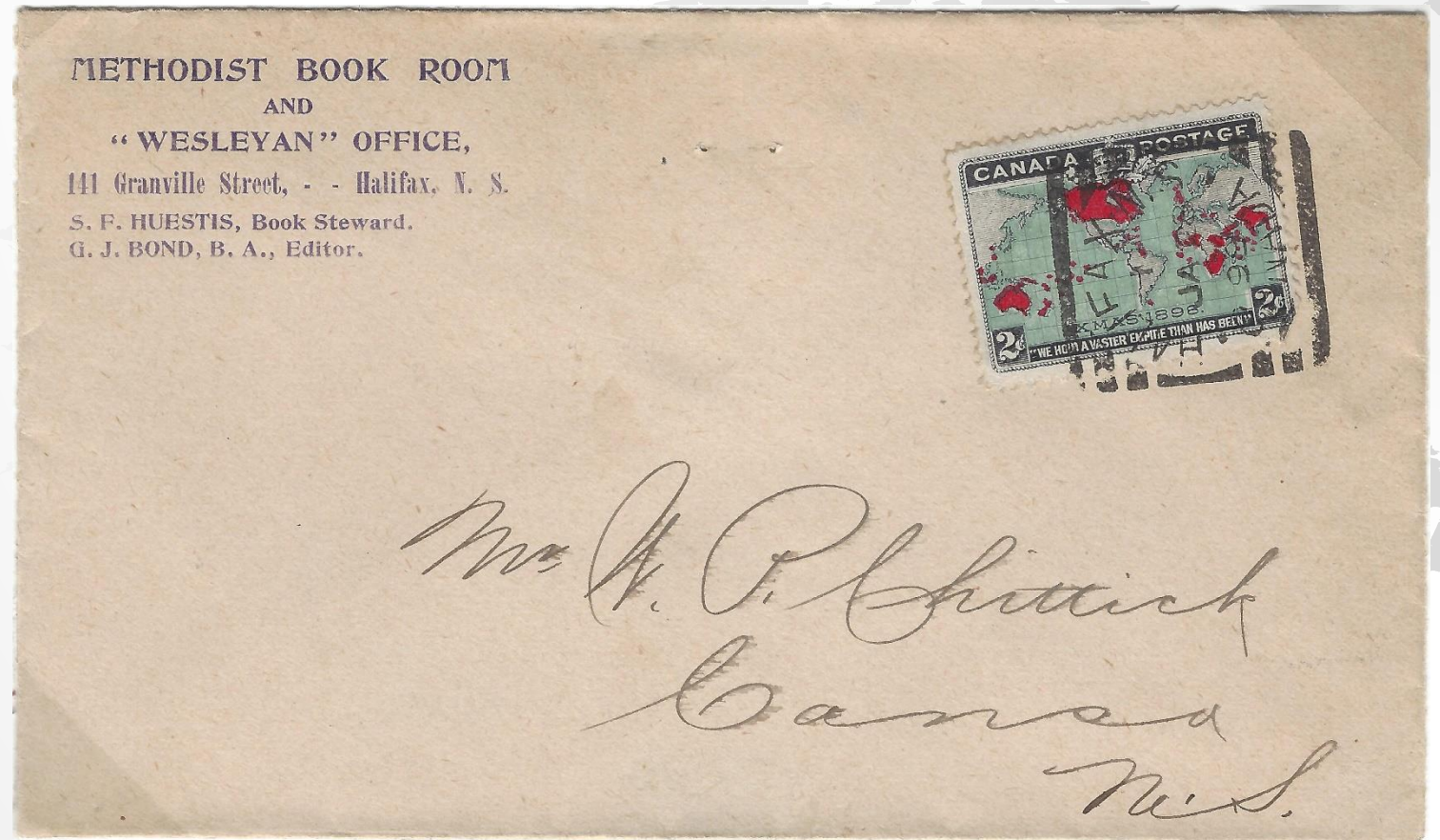
Usages – Early Uses of Plate 1



P1-83 Lavender Sea
January 11, 1899
Bathurst St., Toronto, Ontario



P1-79 Pale Blue Green Sea
February 19, 1899
Namino, British Columbia

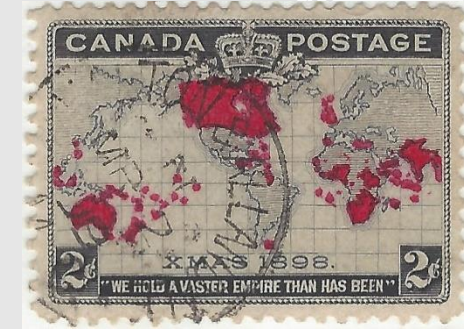


P1-76 Pale Blue Green Sea
January 28, 1898 (error in slug year, 1899 correct)
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Usages – Early Uses of Plate 1

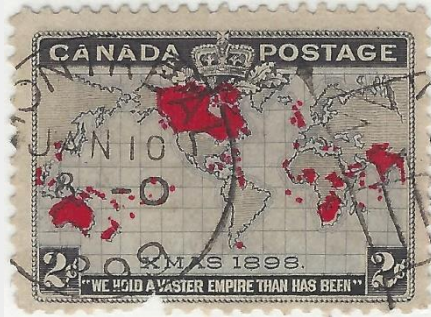


P1-08 Blue Green Sea
March 1, 1899
Antigonish, Nova Scotia



P1-39 Lavender Sea
March 2, 1899
Trenton & Allandale RPO

Usages – Early Uses of Plate 2



P2-98 Lavender Sea
January 10, 1899
Montreal, Quebec



P2-34 Very Deep Blue Green
January 13, 1899
Montreal, Quebec



P2-49 Very Deep Blue Green Sea
January 19, 1899
Canfield Junction & St Thomas RPO



P2-80 Very Deep Blue Green Sea
January 21, 1899
Toronto & Ottawa CPR Railway

Usages – Early Uses of Plate 2



P2-96 Very Deep Blue Green Sea
January 28, 1899
Montreal, Quebec



P2-07 Very Deep Blue Green Sea
February 28, 1899
Woodstock, Ontario

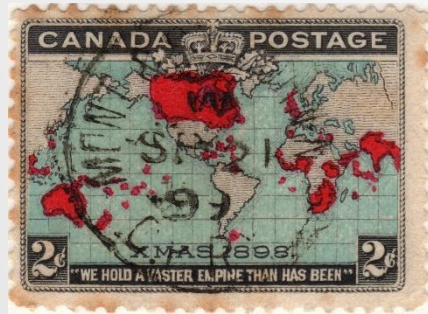


P2-89 Pale Blue Green Sea
February xx, 1899
New Glasgow, Nova Scotia

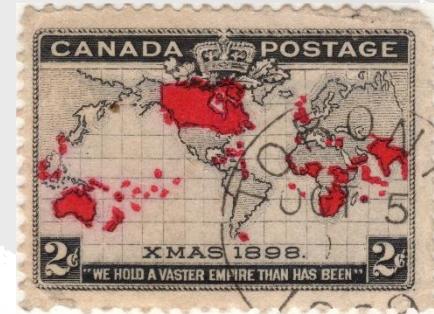
Usages – Early Uses of Plate 2



P2-33 Very Deep Blue Green
June 15, 1899
St. Catharines, Ontario



P2-24 Very Deep Blue Green Sea
September 1, 1899
Montreal, Quebec



P2-64 Lavender Sea
October 5, 1899
Toronto, Ontario

Usages – Early Uses of Plate 2



P2-87 Lavender Sea
November 24, 1904

Not-so-early use, pair on registered cover to Peterboro, Ontario
2¢ ½ ounce letter rate plus 5¢ registration fee

Usages – Early Uses of Plate 3



P3-04 Lavender Sea
January 13, 1899
Montreal, Quebec

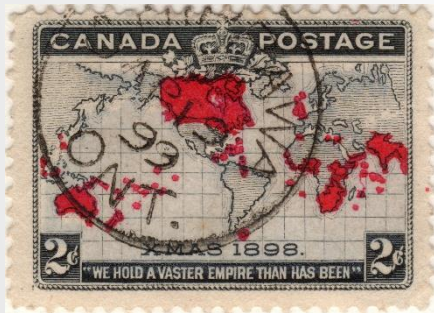


P3-80 Lavender Sea
March 10, 1899
Carlton St. Post Office, Toronto, Ontario

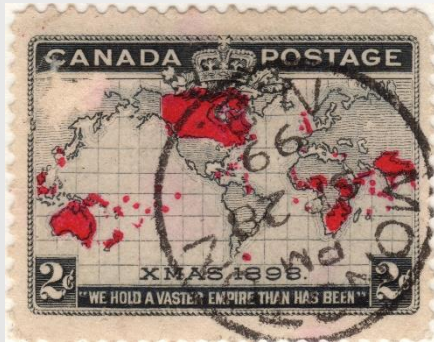


P3-61 Lavender Sea
March 24, 1899
Port Perry, Ontario

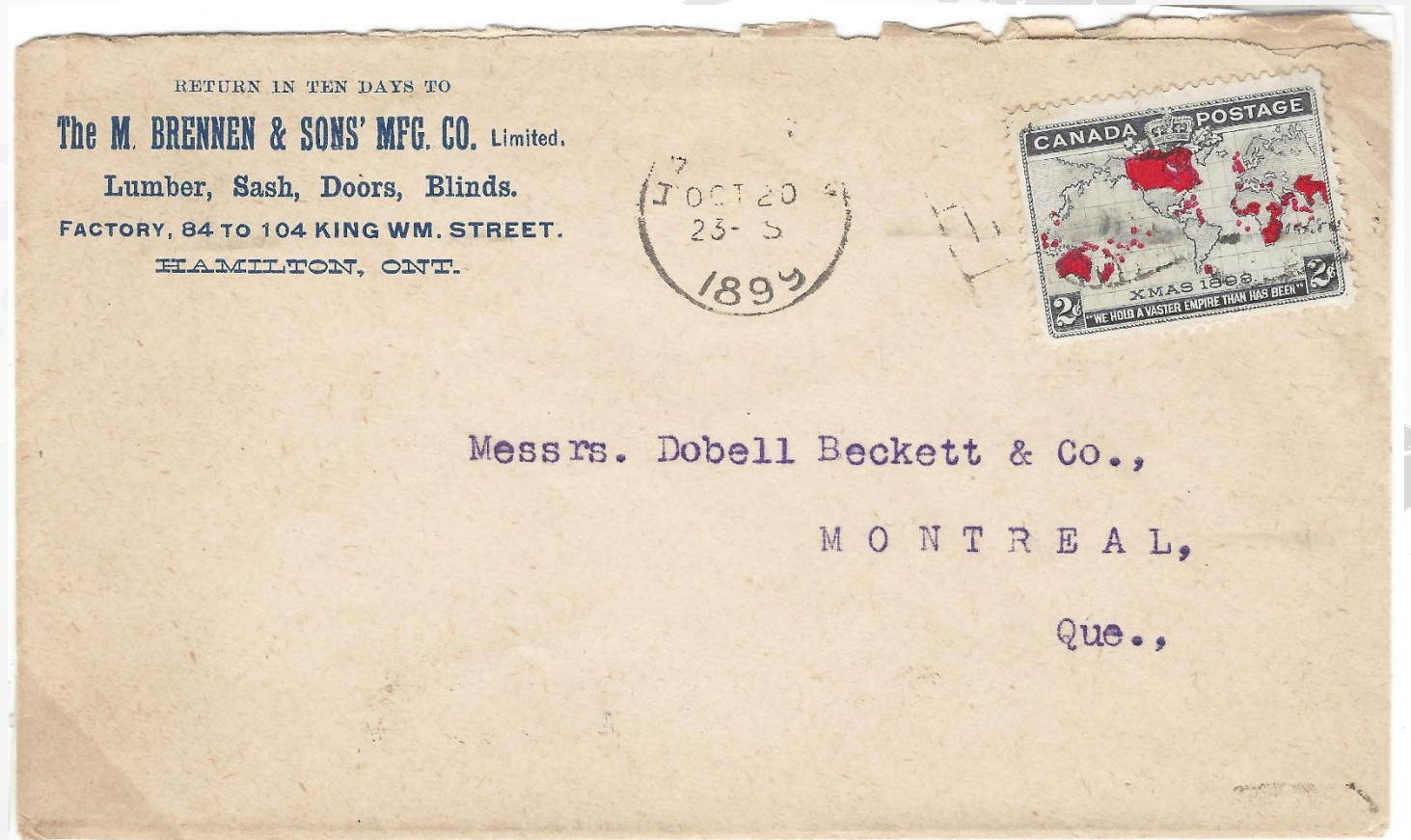
Usages – Early Uses of Plate 3



P3-31 Lavender Sea
April 19, 1899
Ottawa, Ontario

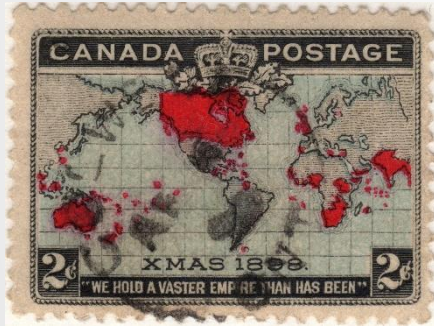


P3-43 Lavender Sea
November 28, 1899
Moncton, Nova Scotia



P3-24 Lavender Sea
October 20, 1899
Hamilton, Ontario

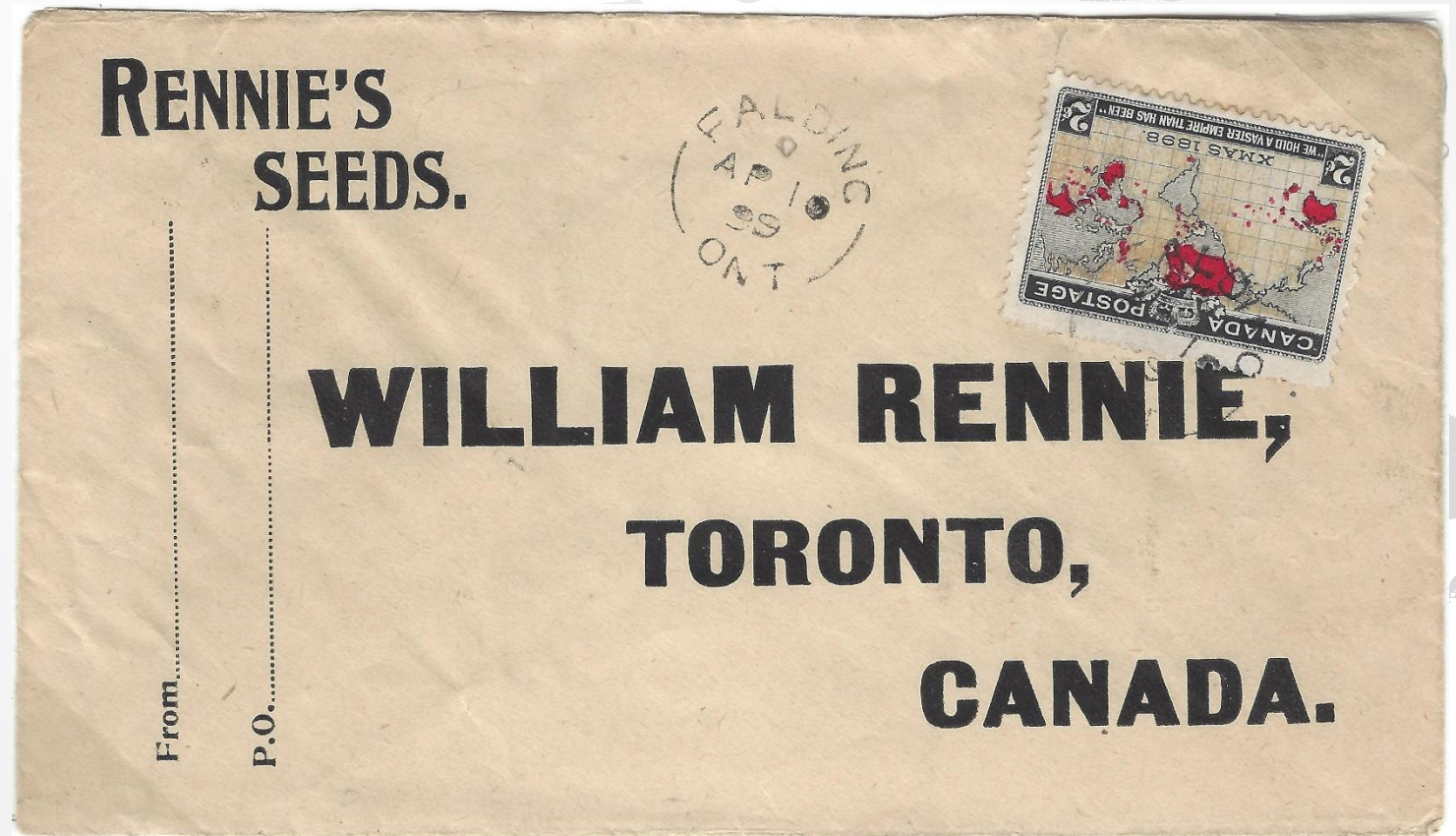
Usages – Early Uses of Plate 5



P5-14 Lavender Sea
April xx, 1899
Ottawa, Ontario



P5-91 Lavender Sea
September 28, 1899
London, Ontario



P5-73 Lavender Sea ("Muddy Waters" changeling)
April 10, 1899
Hamilton, Ontario

Imperforates

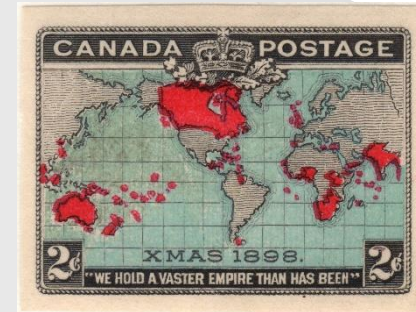
Evidence suggests imperforate map stamps were created for use as presentations to dignitaries or to commemorate special events. Many were pasted on post office walls and then removed, resulting in thinned or partially damaged copies.



P1-13,14 Lavender Sea



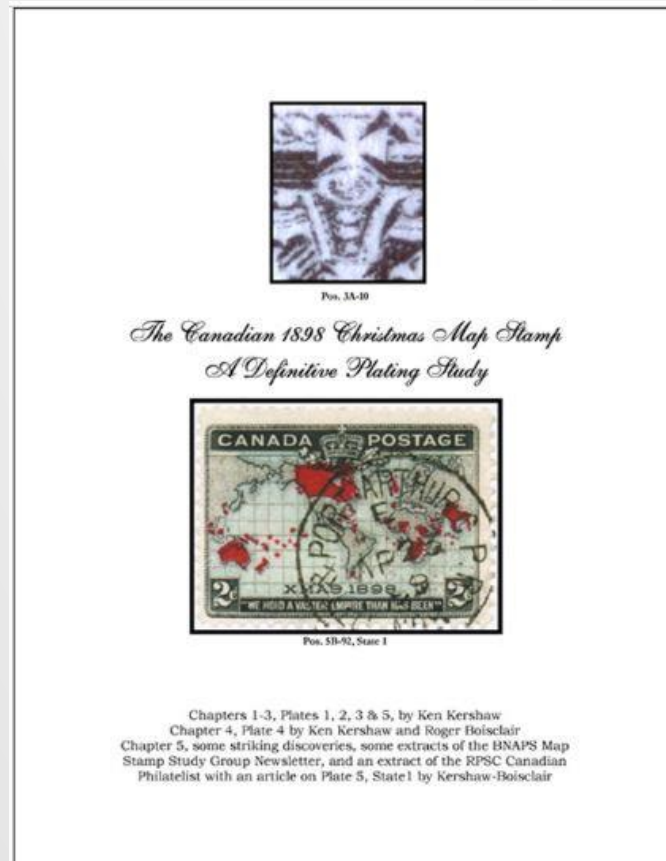
P1-35,36 Lavender Sea



P2-100 Blue Green Sea

Conclusion

I hope you enjoyed this brief look at a truly fascinating stamp issue. There is much more to the story. For further investigation I can recommend the best masterwork on the subject, the four volume “The Canadian 1898 Christmas Map Stamp- A Definitive Plating Study” Volumes 1-4 by Ken Kershaw and Roger Boisclair.



Scanning and Layout by Tom Fortunato